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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 0828
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2816
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 2201
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000124

SIPDIS

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FOR AMBASSADOR DANILOVICH FROM AMBASSADOR YOVANOVITCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID KG
SUBJECT: GOING FORWARD WITH KYRGYZSTAN'S THRESHOLD COUNTRY
PROGRAM

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Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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¶1. (C) Following is a letter from Ambassador Yovanovitch to Millennium Challenge Corporation Chief Executive Officer Ambassador John Danilovich.

Begin text:

Ambassador Danilovich,

As you take up the question of whether to proceed with Kyrgyzstan's MCA Threshold Program, I wanted to take the opportunity to convey my thoughts. I share your concerns about Kyrgyzstan's poor parliamentary elections this past December and worry about the government's conflicting signals regarding sustaining and developing Kyrgyzstan's pluralism.

Yet, despite these concerns, I believe that going forward with the Threshold Program without delay best corresponds to meeting MCC's development objectives in general and specifically for Kyrgyzstan. Here is why:

There remains much space and genuine hope for reform. President Bakiev in his first address to the new parliament identified judicial and law enforcement reform -- the focus of Kyrgyzstan's Threshold Program -- as priority areas. Separately, he has instructed his staff to take measures to improve the Kyrgyz Republic's MCC indicator scores. The GOKG is aware of MCC questions about the elections. The President's Chief of Staff and our MCC point person, Medet Sadyrkulov, is preparing a letter to you with a statement of Kyrgyz commitment and a list of concrete steps to improve its democratic governance. Finally, despite the poor elections, Freedom House still scores Kyrgyzstan higher than its neighbors for political rights and civil liberties.

The Threshold Program has a good chance to succeed in facilitating major improvements in Kyrgyzstan's governance. At a time when parliament has been weakened as a check on executive power, strengthening the judicial system becomes all the more important. Changes will take place in the law enforcement and judicial systems; we have the opportunity to make them transformative.

The program benefits from political will. A wide range of Kyrgyz officials took real ownership of this program during the active negotiations; they want these reforms to go forward. Prime Minister Chudinov told me that implementing the program will be a priority. In addition, MCC champion Sadyrkulov will lead Threshold implementation and has consistently stated his commitment to ensuring that governance reforms proceed. The program targets Kyrgyzstan's most serious shortcomings in promoting rule of law and reduction of corruption in the judiciary, law enforcement, and criminal justice systems. There is widespread consensus -- even in the Ministry of Justice, which will lose power -- on the necessity and the substance of reforms outlined by the Threshold Program. Just last week, civil society members told me that what is needed in Kyrgyzstan is training for judges and the police, so they know how to behave in a rule of law society; this is exactly what the Threshold Program envisions. The conditions are good for successful implementation now.

Delaying the launch of the Threshold Program could imperil the program. After two years of negotiations and a finalized text of the Threshold Program agreement that includes several conditionalities for assistance, any further delay would likely convince the Kyrgyz that we never seriously intended to go forward. MCC could lose tremendous leverage to make a real difference. It could also have negative implications for other U.S. programs, as well as the bilateral

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relationship.

The Kyrgyz understand that they need to improve the ruling justly indicators and are committed to doing so. The Threshold Program itself recognizes that Kyrgyzstan has shortcomings and contains extensive conditionalities which allow us to monitor progress and suspend the program if warranted. MCC has the opportunity to become a change agent in Kyrgyzstan. I recommend that we move forward with the Threshold Program, as I firmly believe that MCC's investment in Kyrgyzstan's future now will pay big dividends later.

I look forward to working with you and your staff on how MCC plans to proceed with Kyrgyzstan's Threshold Program.

Sincerely,

Marie Yovanovitch

End text.

YOVANOVITCH